

After speaking for a few minutes on the floor of the Congress about the life and work of Ronald Reagan, I walked to the Speaker's office to sign the bereavement book for the Reagan family.

As I was about to turn into the Speaker's office, I peered into the Capitol Rotunda and there it was...the small, black-draped catafalque on which the remains of the 40th President of the United States would rest in just a few hours. This same platform was hurriedly constructed following the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln. It bore his casket and has been the foundation for every State Funeral since 1864.

I slowed my gait and strode slowly into the familiar domed room and a profound sadness settled on my heart. As Capitol employees scurried about amidst the crash and bang of platform construction...there it was, a silent sentry awaiting its charge. I felt certain that someday I would see that same funeral catafalque on display in a museum but today, here it sits, waiting for the role it will play in bearing, for a short while, those precious remains of the mortal elements of a great man. This is going to be a long day. -Mike Pence